

Did You Know?

During World War II, many of the Bureau’s fire towers served a dual duty as enemy aircraft spotting stations.

The 1949 Northeastern Forest Fire Protection Commission became the first international agreement to cover forest fires when Quebec signed on in 1969.

The May 8, 1957 Plymouth Fire scorched over 15,000 acres and had a ten mile front or head.

A U.S. Forest Service study found that Barnstable and Plymouth counties, with their sandy soil, drying winds and fuel type are more fire prone than fire ravaged Southern California.

Over 98% of forest fires in Massachusetts are caused by human carelessness, (improperly disposed of cigarettes, vandalism, neglected permit fires, etc.).

Brush Breakers, which can easily drive over small trees, were developed in Barnstable County in the 1930’s.

Smokey Bear was created of the nation’s need to protect her forested resources and enable the war effort in 1944.

Contact Information

Chief Fire Warden (617)727-3180 ext 665
FEPP Coordinator (508)833-8743
Program Coordinator (413)538-8892
High Grounds Coordinator (413)245-9966
Communications Center 1-800-831-0569

District	1	Barnstable, Dukes and Nantucket	County	"	(508)888-1149
District	2	Plymouth	"	"	(508)866-4996
District	3	Bristol	"	"	(508)644-5522
District	4	Norfolk	"	"	(508)543-5850
District	5	Essex	"	"	(978)887-5931
District	6	N. Middlesex	"	"	(978)369-9738
District	7	S. Worcester	"	"	(508)476-7006
District	8	N. Worcester	"	"	(978)874-2303
District	9	Franklin	"	"	(978)544-2760
District	10	Hampshire	"	"	(413)253-1798
District	11	Hampden	"	"	(413)594-3149
District	12	Berkshire	"	"	(413)442-8928
District	14	S. Middlesex	"	"	(508)497-0147

Why protection from forest fires is important:

The value of forest resources...wood, water, wildlife and recreation, has skyrocketed in Massachusetts.

More people are building homes in forest environments.

Forests protect soils and watersheds, improve air quality, reduce noise and pollution and provide us with numerous amenities which improve the quality of life.

Wildlife is dependent on forests and open space for food and shelter.

The planting of trees and management of our forest resources is cited as one possible cure to global warming.

Many citizens enjoy the state’s outdoors by fishing, camping, hunting, hiking and many other forms of recreation.

-Roxanne Savoie



Photo: Paul Piquette, Active Fire.

Remember: Only you can prevent forest fires

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA)
Department of Environmental Management
Division of Forests and Parks

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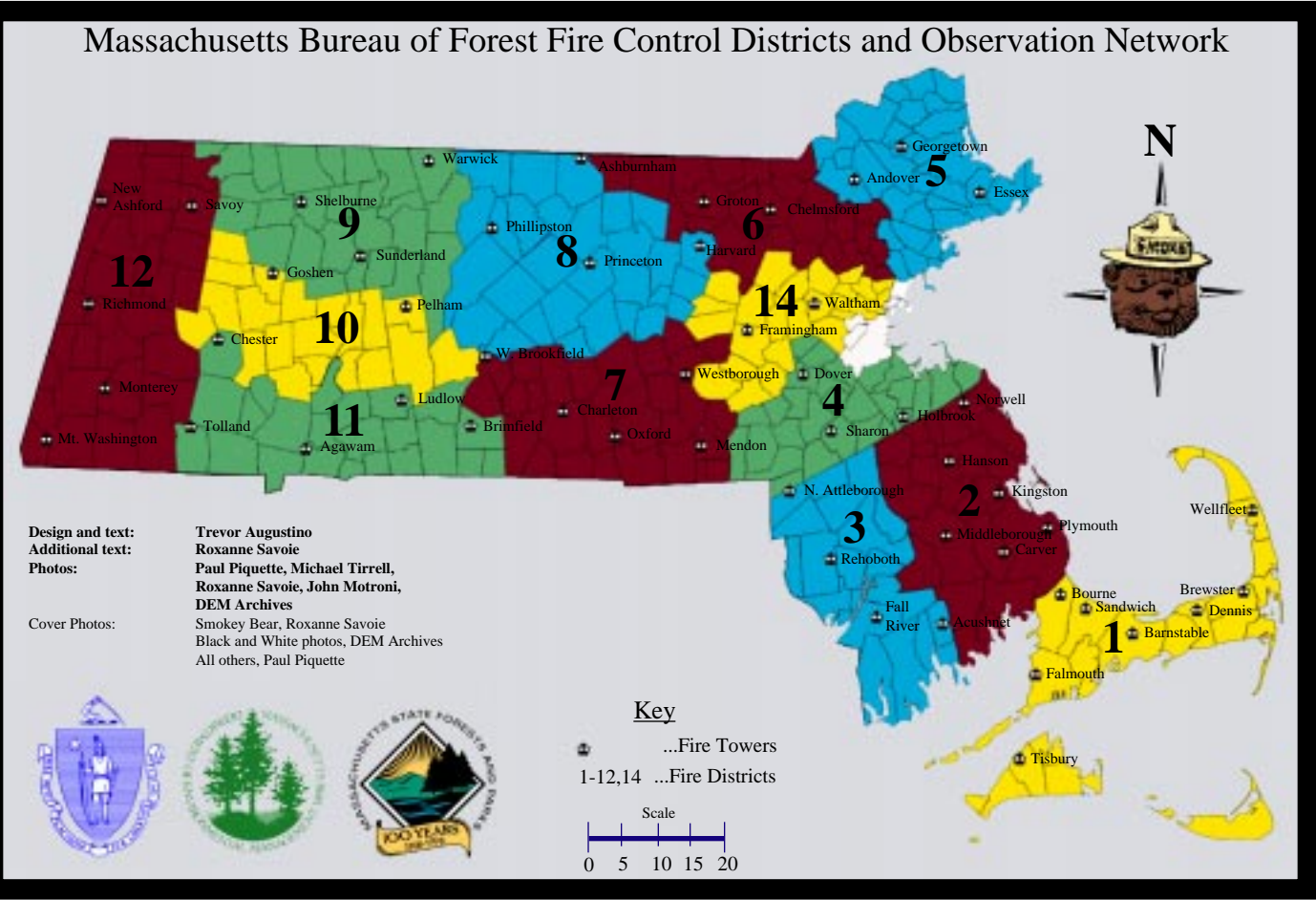
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The Massachusetts Bureau of Forest Fire Control



Prevention, Detection and Suppression





Photos: DEM Archives.



Photo: Michael Tirrell. 1964 Dodge Power Wagon.

Since 1911, the Massachusetts Bureau of Forest Fire Control has been providing aid, assistance and advice to the Commonwealth's cities and towns in the prevention, detection and suppression of forest fires. This brochure details these and other services that the Bureau provides as it works towards the protection of 3.5 million acres of state, public and private wooded lands, and over 100,000 acres of municipal drinking water reservoirs that lie within Massachusetts.

The Bureau is an active participant with all municipal fire departments in this endeavor. It also enjoys close cooperation with county and local forest warden committees, town and city foresters, state and local law enforcement agencies, and the Commonwealth's county and statewide civil defense and mutual assistance organizations.

Overtime, these combined efforts have contributed to a safer Massachusetts. In 1911, over 34 acres were burned on average during each occurrence of forest fire. Since then that figure has been reduced to 1.17 acres.* This generous reduction has occurred while the state has tripled the area of its wooded lands, more people have built homes within forested environments, and recreational opportunities in the Commonwealth's many forests and parks have exploded.

Prevention

In 1926, the Bureau of Forest Fire Control inaugurated a system of prevention programming and pre-suppression activities within Barnstable County that by 1929, had reduced suppression costs in that county by 80%.*



Photo: Michael Tirrell. Smokey and tower model

Today, the Bureau of Forest Fire Control conducts numerous education programs to increase public awareness of the prevention and hazards of forest fire. Much of this activity focuses on practical steps people can take to reduce the threat posed by forest fire and are often held in conjunction with local fire departments.

The Bureau uses many and varied tools to spread the methods and benefits of prevention. It serves as the Commonwealth's guardian of the nation's symbol of fire prevention; Smokey Bear. Under the auspices of the U.S. Forest Service, it sponsors Smokey's appearances at schools, fairs, educational programs and parades throughout Massachusetts. Programming is also conducted from Bureau managed forest fire observation towers and in its new mobile fire observation cabin model. Additional tools are the Bureau's 45 foot prevention trailer, demonstrations using modern forest fire fighting equipment, and the ongoing training of other agency and local fire fighters.

Bureau personnel also carry out pre-suppression activities through the construction and maintenance of fire breaks, water holes and general fuel reduction within forested areas.

Detection

The early detection of forest fires is a key part of the Bureau's overall effort. The sooner a suspicious smoke is located and units are dispatched for investigation lessens needless damage to homes and property, and lowers overall suppression costs.



Photo: John Motroni. Bureau Fire Tower.

Early detection is achieved by trained Bureau observers who staff the statewide network of 42 operating fire towers. From their high vantage points, observers utilize alidade tables (see cover), binoculars, and topographic maps to triangulate the precise location of any fire. This information is then given to local community fire departments or Bureau district personnel for prompt response.

The Bureau of Forest Fire Control also uses pro-active, county-based fire patrols of forested areas during periods of high fire danger. These patrols assist cities and towns in prevention efforts and allow for the swift deployment of mobile equipment for suppression of fires during their incipient stage.

This system can be supplemented by contracted, fixed wing detection aircraft during periods of extreme fire danger.

Suppression

When fire does strike, Forest Fire Control personnel are prepared to respond. Bureau units are used at all fires that occur on state owned forest land and are available to municipal fire departments for mutual assistance purposes. Bureau fire-fighters are trained in the use of forestry tools, water pumps, brush breakers, and other motorized equipment; as well as fire behavior and fire safety. Water tankers, portable pumps, chain saws and other necessary equipment are maintained and ready for deployment. Individual members are prepared to lend advice and expertise in helo-port operations, water handling, fire behavior, Incident Command and other specialties.



Photo: Paul Piquette. Digging Line.

Massachusetts also benefits from mutual aid agreements that the Commonwealth and Bureau are party to with other state and provincial forest fire control agencies. As a member of the Northeastern Forest Fire Protection Commission and through the USDA Forest Service, the Bureau may call upon additional resources to combat any extreme conflagration that may occur within Massachusetts.

Other Services

Federal Excess Property Program (FEPP)

Within the Commonwealth, the Bureau administers the USDA Forest Service's Excess Property Program. This program provides cities and towns with free fire fighting materials. Any equipment acquired must be used for fire control purposes only. Since its inception, Massachusetts fire departments and agencies have benefited by the free use of portable pumps, generators, vehicles and other necessary equipment worth over \$15 million.*

Rural Community Fire Protection (RCFP)

Through the USDA Forest Service's RCFP program, the Bureau is enabled to issue grants and materials to towns with less



Photo: Michael Tirrell. Excess 5/4 ton pickup

than 10,000 population. This program provides technical, financial and other assistance to fire departments for forest fire related purposes. Small towns have been the recipients of training, Class A foam, personal protective gear, forestry tools, and other fire suppression equipment.

Emergencies

Assistance is provided to communities and state agencies (such as the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency) during any disaster or civil defense emergency. Bureau personnel have aided in recovery efforts after major incidents like the Blizzard of '78, Hurricane Bob and the combined hurricane and flood of 1938. Also, individual members are first responder certified, as well as trained for search and rescue operations.

Training and Instruction

Through the Massachusetts Fire Academy and by arrangement, trained Bureau personnel teach the most current information on fire behavior, modern methods of fire suppression, and conduct demonstrations using modern fire fighting equipment for training purposes. Specialized training is also provided to municipal fire-fighters to prepare them for the U.S. Forest Service Red Card, which is required for deployment to any out of state fire.

Out of State Service

The Bureau maintains a functioning, specialized wildfire crew that is Red Card certified for deployment to any out of state fire managed by the Federal Government USDA. Bureau crews have fought fires at Palomar, CA, Yellowstone, WY, the Grasslands of North Dakota, Montana, Idaho and Florida.



Photo: Paul Piquette. Western Fire Crew.

And, as a member of the Northeastern Forest Fire Protection Commission, (also known as the COMPACT), the Bureau lends equipment, personnel and expertise to fellow members. Under this agreement, Massachusetts was one of several states to lend portable pumps and forestry hose to Quebec when that province was ravaged by forest fires in 1995.

*Notes based upon DEM records and Annual Reports.